



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF QUEENSLAND

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC WORKS

**REPORT
OF AN INQUIRY
INTO**

**THE PROPOSED UPGRADE OF
TOWNSVILLE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE**

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**Parliamentary Committee of Public Works Report No. 12
February 1993**

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC WORKS

No.	Report	Date Tabled
1	Annual Report for the period ending 30 June 1989	6 July 1989
2	Inquiry into the proposed construction by the Brisbane and Area Water Board of a Dam on the Albert River at Wolffdene (September 1989)	28 September 1989
	<i>* Due to incorrect numbering of Reports there is no Public Works Committee Report No. 3 in this series</i>	
4	Annual Report for the period 6 March to 30 June 1990	23 August 1990
5	Bundaberg Hospital Redevelopment - Stage Two (October 1990)	24 October 1990
6	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing - The Future (May 1991)	23 May 1991
7	Annual Report for the period 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1991	18 July 1991
8	Building another Mental Institution or Housing a new Mental Health Service? - a report on community debate concerning construction of the new Kirwan Psychiatric Rehabilitation Unit (October 1991)	24 October 1991
9	Consultation and Planning for Schools and Colleges between State and Local Authorities (November 1991)	5 December 1991
10	The proposal to build a 33-level office block at 111 George Street (November 1991)	5 December 1991
	Annual Report 1991 - 1992	August 1992
11	Kirwan Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre	26 February 1993

This Committee tables transcripts of evidence however it does not number them and they are not included in this list.

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

To: The Honourable the Speaker
Members of the Legislative Assembly

I have great pleasure in presenting this report concerning the proposed redevelopment of the Townsville Correctional Centre. This inquiry was of significant informational and educational value to this Committee, as it was the Committee's first opportunity to look at a facility managed by the Queensland Corrective Services Commission. At the outset of the inquiry it was plain that the need for this redevelopment was urgent - Townsville Correctional Centre being the State's oldest correctional centre and one of its largest.

This report addresses the urgent need for the redevelopment and for greatly expanded rehabilitation and education programmes within the Townsville Correctional Centre. The Committee identified the most significant barrier to the provision of these services as the security fences and walls within the jail which prevent movement of prisoners from one area to another and require extraordinarily high levels of staff to provide escorts for prisoners inside the complex. The Committee has devoted some attention to the way in which the walls and barriers are presently constructed and the way in which members felt they should be constructed in the future. In preparing the recommendations for this report, the Committee has tried to ensure that the plans put in place by the Queensland Corrective Services Commission can come to fruition without any significant changes. The speed with which this project proceeds is of ultimate importance to the Committee.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Commission on the work that it has achieved in this planning process. Committee members received excellent information from the Commission's officers and were treated with extraordinarily high standards of courtesy and care by all that we met through this investigation and inquiry process. The Queensland Corrective Services Commission staff provided the Committee with well presented and informative documents prior to the hearing and provided the Committee with all of the essential resources and information so that Members could thoroughly understand the issues at stake and the Commission's plans to redevelop the Townsville Correctional Centre.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank members and staff of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission, the North Queensland Prisoners Aid Society, Townsville Community Legal Service and Murri Action for their valuable contribution to the inquiry. Members also wish to thank staff of Parliamentary Hansard section, the Committee secretariat. The Committee records its grateful appreciation for the fine, professional service rendered to the Committee by its Research Director, Ms Carol Keliher.

Ms Judy Spence MLA
Chairman

Parliament House, Brisbane

February 1993

INTRODUCTION

The Parliamentary Committee of Public Works nominated the redevelopment of the Townsville Correctional Centre for review in its Annual Report published in September 1992. In the intervening months between the publication of the Annual Report and scheduling the inquiry, an Aboriginal inmate of the Centre suicided and a wing of the new Harold Gregg unit was destroyed by fire. The Committee saw these matters as important indicators of the dissatisfaction which prisoners felt and were reminded of the extremely unhappy and difficult times which preceded the relocation of the Brisbane Correctional Centre - Boggo Road.

In selecting this project the Committee identified a number of issues to take up with the Queensland Corrective Services Commission and the Townsville Correctional Centre management. The first issue was the effectiveness and efficiency of redeveloping a very old site, as opposed to selecting a green field site and beginning from a new base. The extremely expensive nature of such a proposal and the high cost involved in staff retraining and redundancy packages put this proposal beyond the Queensland Corrective Services Commission's budget. As well, the Commission was reluctant to abandon a very good site which contains a number of modern and serviceable buildings. The Committee accepted the reasoning behind rejection of this option.

Having scrutinised the plans which the Queensland Corrective Services Commission presented, inspected the Townsville Correctional Centre and questioned the officers of the Commission the Committee identified five major issues of concern:

- the proposed walls and security barriers and the impact they would have on staff productivity, prisoner access to programmes and the psychological well being of the people locked behind the high solid brick walls.
- the consultation processes which the Commission used to develop this project and the capacity of external agencies to interact with the Commission, the Centre's management and prison inmates.
- services and programmes which address the specific cultural and educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inmates.
- provision of effective re-education and training programmes to provide those leaving the Centre with skills and opportunities to ensure a better and more productive life.
- the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which are relevant to this redevelopment.
- provision of proper correctional services for women in the Centre.

The Committee prepared itself to investigate this redevelopment proposal by meeting with the Commission's officers and gathering information from the Commission and other sources. On Tuesday 8 December 1992 the Committee inspected the Townsville Correctional Centre and spoke to staff and administration personnel from the Centre and from the Queensland Corrective Services Commission. The conduct of this inquiry was assisted by the services of the Parliamentary Hansard section and verbatim transcripts of the evidence taken have been presented to the Legislative Assembly and filed in the Assembly archives. The report uses significant extracts from those transcripts, parts of which have been edited in the interests of those reading the report. Three people from the Townsville community who had a particular interest in this redevelopment were present at the hearing and made presentations to the Committee.

The report is divided into five chapters, each one addressing specific issues and making recommendations concerning those issues. The recommendations are listed again at the end of the report. In summarising and presenting this report, the Committee would stress the urgent need for this redevelopment to proceed. The Committee reminds the Queensland Corrective Services Commission that Townsville Correctional Centre is now the oldest and worst accommodation which it administers

and that in the interests of equity and fairness it ought to have some priority over new developments.

1. PLANNING FOR CHANGE

The Townsville Correctional Centre is over a century old. Three of the original cell blocks are still standing and one was still in use in 1989. At the time of this inquiry some parts of the old jail had been re-commissioned for use because of rioting and destruction by fire of a wing of the relatively new Harold Gregg maximum security block. This event served as a stimulus to the Committee to look very closely at conditions in the jail and the time-table of the proposed redevelopment.

The Townsville Correctional Centre has been in need of re-development for many years. It provided all corrective services to north Queensland until 1989 when it was relieved of some of the pressures to provide these services by the development of the Lotus Glen Correctional Centre outside of Mareeba. The Townsville Correctional Centre redevelopment is essential if the Corrective Services Commission is ever to achieve its stated mission. There is an urgent need for change which has been recognised not only by the Commission but many national and international bodies such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, The Human Rights Commission and Amnesty International.

1.1 A MISSION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The Committee applauds the Queensland Corrective Services Commission's mission of service which is printed below.

- To structure opportunities for offenders to correct their offending behaviour within a humane environment appropriate to their security classification whether they be supervised in institutions or in the community.
- To confront offenders with the consequences of their offending behaviour and, based on individual assessment, provide access to opportunities for self-development offered by Government and community agencies.
- To deal with offenders humanely and professionally, treat them in the manner their behaviour earns and encourage the development of positive self-image by the offenders through rewarding their improved behaviour.
- To encourage offenders to participate in the workforce, whether they be supervised in the community or in institutions, and where reasonable financial reward is achieved, the offender is expected to make contribution to the Commission and/or to society.
- To actively seek community involvement and support and act as a community sponsor and developer for the provision of services likely to reduce offending behaviour.

The Committee takes due note of these aspirations and assumes that it is with such thoughts in mind that the Commission has proposed significant changes to the Townsville Correctional Centre.

1.2 A STRATEGY FOR BETTER SERVICE

The Committee's first task in this inquiry was to establish answers to the question - why build this facility in this place at this time? The reply to this questioning covered the assessment of other green field sites owned by the Queensland Corrective Services Commission and the cost of establishing new facilities. This option was explored by the Commission and rejected. The decision to proceed with redevelopment of the present site was supported because cost of development of a new site was estimated at \$40 million and the Commission could not justify abandoning its investment in the relatively new maximum security Harold Gregg Unit. The projected growth in demand for corrective services in north Queensland is in the western areas. This demand will be met by development of a 30-40 bed correctional centre in Mt Isa and many more community services in the remote Aboriginal townships. The Commission plans to develop its WORC (Western outreach camps) programme to help keep low security offenders in closer proximity to their families and community. By upgrading the Townsville Correctional Centre in this way at this time the Queensland Corrective Services Commission believes that it will be able to provide sufficient places for prisoners entering the system in north Queensland and keep pace with the prison population growth projections until well into the next century.

The principal changes to the complex were detailed by Mr Millican, Director, Planning, Corrective Services Commission. The following extract from the transcript of evidence gives details of specific changes to the Townsville Correctional Centre which the Commission's strategic plan proposed.

Mr Millican: Our proposal to redevelop Townsville Correctional Centre contributes to all the program areas within the commission's strategic plan; namely, **stakeholders**, in terms of providing an opportunity for our stakeholders in the community to have input into the design of our prisons to ensure that it meets their needs in terms of both the rehabilitative process and security; and certainly **offenders**, to meet the changing needs of offenders and the changing profile of offenders entering the correctional system. Our **human resources**, that is, the people who work for us—our staff—will have an opportunity to have direct input into the design and construction of this facility, to again meet their needs in terms of managing offenders and their own safety and security. It is certainly in keeping with our major corporate goal to have **appropriate physical facilities** using modern technology, which will enable our staff to operate effectively and meet the Queensland Corrective Services Commission's overall goals and mission statement. Likewise, our fifth program area was **industries or funding**. At the moment, the industries in Townsville Correctional Centre operate in fairly archaic conditions, particularly the laundry and the tailor shop, which are two of the primary revenue-producing industries within Townsville Correctional Centre. Now is the opportunity to replace those with a more modern, up-to-date facility to meet both our needs and the needs of our inmates for training and work and the needs, more importantly, of our clients in the community and, in particular, in the case of our laundries, the regional health authority, which obviously demands high standards.

The schedule for redevelopment of the complex is incremental, moving from the perimeter security fence through to establishment of new accommodation, industry facilities and community facilities, as Mr Millican explained:

Mr Millican: This program is being phased over three years, with preliminary work planned to commence this year, major construction and design this year, with major construction falling into the financial year 1993-94, followed by the final phase of the program in 1994-95, aiming for completion some time in late 1995.

We are looking at providing better facilities for our women who are currently all housed in high-security facilities and do not have the range of accommodation facilities available to them that their male counterparts have in Townsville, or indeed, that the other females within the correctional environment have in the south-east corner. We are concerned about the Aboriginal and Islander community, which makes up a large proportion of the inmate population in Townsville Correctional Centre. With that aim, our program is not specifically focused totally on Townsville but also incorporates a plan for an annexe to Townsville Correctional Centre to be placed closer to the local communities, particularly the gulf communities, to try to prevent large numbers of Aboriginal inmates coming to Townsville Correctional Centre, to have them serve their sentences closer to their communities—indeed, as part of our overall philosophy, within their communities—and to provide for a rapid turnaround of those people back into community supervision.

The Committee was presented with a significant amount of planning information throughout the inquiry. Prior to presenting detailed recommendations concerning the proposed development, the Committee wishes to signal its agreement in principal with the general thrust of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission's plans for the Townsville Correctional Centre and recommends:

RECOMMENDATION ONE

that the Queensland Corrective Services Commission's strategic plan for re-development of the Townsville Correctional Centre proceed.

2. DETAILED PROPOSALS FOR REDEVELOPMENT

The plans of the present layout and the proposed layout of the Townsville Correctional Centre are detailed below. The details of the proposed changes were presented by Mr John Forster, Consulting Architect, Operational Planning and Co-ordination, Queensland Corrective Services Commission.

Mr Forster: The facility as it stands comprises One Division, Two Division and the women's unit. The women's facility was constructed in the late eighties. One Division is generally a 100-year-old facility. The industries block was built in the 1960s, 1970s. Harold Gregg, being a new unit, was only recently opened. Two Division has a mixture of buildings which could be described as four blocks of sixties design and two blocks that were finished in the eighties but reflect the thinking of the early seventies. We intend to put ourselves in a position where we can carry on with the redevelopment, but we need to provide a secure perimeter to the Two Division area. To do that, we have already allocated out of our capital works budget \$1.5m to provide a secure perimeter to the Two Division area. That work is ongoing. As we speak, the lighting system is being installed. The roadworks and the second fence will be under construction within the next two months. Once we have established that perimeter, we are then in a position that we can relocate those facilities remaining within One Division that we want to maintain out into the Two Division area. That will be the relocation of the industries building. Also, we will be relocating the medical facility, which operates inside One Division at the moment. The plan at this stage is to provide a temporary building adjacent to the rear wall of One Division to service both One Division and Two Division until we carry on with the work on the women's facility. At that point, we will have also fenced off the Harold Gregg Unit, much as we did when we constructed it, and we will not be using any of the buildings inside One Division. They will be available then for demolition.

On the plan for the redevelopment—you will see the expansion of the industries block in Two Division and the construction of the new entry, which will enable us to service that industries block. It will also give us the capacity to provide a check area for both visitors and vehicles coming onto the site, something that the gate area at the moment is not capable of doing due to its design constraints. That visits area will incorporate technology for the screening of both vehicles and persons. We will be demolishing areas of Two Division. The four older blocks will be demolished. The two remaining blocks will be upgraded to a new standard. We will be providing program facilities in Two Division. Also, to replace the blocks that we remove, we will be providing residential-type accommodation inside the secure perimeter. Within One Division, we will be providing a health and sports area and a hobbies-cum-industry area for those people who remain within the walled area. We will be building a 12 to 14 man special handling unit. We will be converting the existing women's facility into a medical area. We will be adding an extension to the women's unit, which will be available for remand women and high-security women. We will be moving the women out of the accommodation that they are in at the moment onto the reserve into residential-type accommodation. We will give them a range of accommodation, both high security and low security.

In addition, from the money that has been allocated, we will continue with the perimeter upgrade. The \$1.5m we have at this stage is insufficient to finish the other promised component of it. We will be diverting funds to provide additional protection systems and camera coverage to the Two Division perimeter. That covers the physical upgrades that we have planned at this stage. There is also a diagram there that sets out the development time frame through calendar years 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995. The important part of that is that we have, at this stage, planned staged occupation of the newer facility starting in early 1994 and running through to the end of 1994, so that by December 1994/January 1995 all of the works should be in place and occupied.

The Committee although mindful of the budget allocated for this project and the scheduled programme of construction expresses concern that the changes will take so long to be implemented. It is aware of the limitations of maintaining a fully operational, secure, facility whilst a total re-development takes place. In listening to the witnesses it is evident to the Committee that the consolidation of this proposal and a detailed schedule of work would speed the process along. The Committee identified a need for additional specific project management skills to ensure that both the Commission and the Townsville Correctional Centre managers can put the necessary schedules and agreements in place and move this project along. In saying this the Committee recommends

RECOMMENDATION TWO

that the urgent need for this redevelopment be recognised by elimination of any further delays.

3. ELECTRONIC AND BARRIER SECURITY

The Committee made a thorough inspection of the Townsville Correctional Centre. Members passed through three barrier/security walls and a number of other access gates. The barrier wall which the Committee found most oppressive was that around the One Division area. The following exchange was recorded as the Chairman raised questions concerning the need for a barrier wall as opposed to a security barrier between One Division and the other sections of the Centre.

The CHAIRMAN: One of the things that I found most depressing and demoralising about our walk through the prison this morning was the number of walls and gates that the population has to go through to get from one area to the other. It just seems that at the moment the whole centre is just a maze of walls, wire gates and all sorts of things that the prisoners have to transverse in order to do anything. I mean, they cannot even walk from the Harold Gregg unit to any type of grassed area without going through two gates which obviously have to be unlocked by officers, to get to the oval. I have walked around Borallon, for example, and I do not remember seeing a gate or a wall anywhere. Except for the perimeter fencing, that was the only sort of fence that I think stood out.

Mr Millican: Really, that is the basis of our design philosophy, that the perimeter is the fence. The perimeter is the secure outer shell at the correctional centre that permits maximum freedom of flexibility for the staff and inmates inside the correctional centre. Townsville in its current form is difficult, because there are so many nooks, crannies and little hidy-hole areas. I would suggest that, once the inside of One Division is demolished and those newer facilities start to appear, a lot of dividing fences will disappear, and you will have that open environment within the confines of the wall. We imagine the old Two Division having the same thing. The only barrier of note that we will be constructing in addition to the external perimeter is a secure barrier, a fence, around the industries block. That is simply to prevent contraband being moved from the industries block into the living area. Again, to contribute to greater freedom within the living environment, you have to reduce the access to contraband, metal, drugs, alcohol, and particularly those things that can be used as weapons, escape implements, and that sort of thing.

The CHAIRMAN: You have made the decision to use the perimeter wall as part of the wall around One Division. Are there any plans to do anything nice to that wall, which is pretty depressing to look at the moment?

Mr Millican: Obviously, as part of the perimeter upgrade there will be moves made to recondition parts of the wall, clean up the existing front gate area, and that sort of thing. But at the moment, as I said, to be quite honest, no, I had not thought about it.

The CHAIRMAN: To me, the entrance area and front wall are very demoralising, because it is an 1890s wall, I guess, and it looks like that. It looks like the old-fashioned prison. The high-security prisoners inside the wall will have that wall 360 degrees around them, will they not?

Mr Millican: Certainly on the inside of One Division we would encourage the inmates to do what they have done in places such as Boggo Road and other correctional centres, that is paint murals on the walls.

The CHAIRMAN: Although you are saying that those prisoners in there have the opportunity, if they behave, to go to another lower-security area of the prison, they will not actually see any of that area that they can go to, will they, because they will have that big wall all around them?

Mr Millican: Except during visiting time.

The CHAIRMAN: When they go to the industries block?

Mr Millican: If they are employed in those industries. They will not necessarily go there. They may well be employed in the smaller industry hobby area inside.

The CHAIRMAN: So maybe only at visit time would they see what they can look forward to when they leave One Division?

Mr Millican: And also during times of medical treatment. Once they go over to what is now the existing women's division, they can see back out into the old Two Division area. There will be greater flexibility for them to see beyond the wall.

The CHAIRMAN: Did you ever consider getting rid of the brick and cement barrier wall around One Division and replacing it with a different type of security barrier inside?

Mr Millican: Considerable debate about the wall has occurred over many, many months—or even years. The redevelopment program has been finetuned. After all that debate, the ultimate decision by both the paid officials, the executive of the commission, and the board was that the wall remain.

The question of the effects of the solid brick and cement wall around One Division and the reasons for retaining it in the redeveloped centre were not satisfactorily resolved. Two witnesses appearing later in the day, Ms Narelle Sutherland from North Queensland Prisoners Aid Society and Mr Jim Gibney from the Townsville Community Legal Service spoke out against the retention of the One Division wall.

Ms Sutherland: The One Division outside wall should be demolished. As you have pointed out, it is a very depressing, grey, opaque wall. Many prisoners spend up to seven or eight years in maximum security sections of the gaol. As it currently exists, many prisoners in One Division are never moved outside of that wall, even for visits. A number of clients have reported to me feelings of extreme disorientation and panic on being moved out to the medium security section of the gaol after a number of years. They have not actually seen the horizon in that period of time. As a spokesperson for the North Queensland Prisoners Aid Society I reiterate that we think that wall should go.

Ms Sutherland and Mr Gibney spoke at length presenting first hand experiences in dealing with the problems experienced by the inmates of the Centre. Mr Eric Kyle from the Aboriginal community's Murri Action group expanded on many points concerning the difficulties experienced by Aborigines in the Centre.

The Committee pursued the matter of the One Division wall further with Queensland Corrective Services Commission officers, including Mr Gavin Wright, General Manager, Townsville Correctional Centre.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: We heard a very strong plea from the previous three speakers about the wall coming down. I think you might have to explain to me what the taut wire means. If the brick wall were to come down, how can the security of the One Division still be maintained?

Mr Wright: The security of One Division is maintained by the fact that the Harold Gregg Unit is a secure building in itself. It must be remembered that it would still be within the external, quite secure, perimeter. The taut wire is an alarm system which presents a barrier. A very simple explanation of it is that it is a series of posts in the ground with a number of wires strung at a predetermined tension and should anybody attempt to go through or over those wires it alters the tension and sets off an alarm. So it would still be—as you can see on the diagram—encompassed by a taut wire alarm system which would prevent unauthorised movement away from that specified area.

Mr Millican: That is not quite true. If the wall came down there would be no taut wire around the Harold Gregg Unit, it would be around the industry block and the visits area. Otherwise, we have still got a wall, it just happens to be a steel one.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: But that is my point. You could remove the physical wall and still have a protective security barrier through the taut wire. Is that correct?

Mr Millican: The taut wire is an alarm system, a very simple barrier. You walk through it and it sets off an alarm. If you climb it, it collapses on you, but you can get through it. If you take the wall down, it does not affect the integrity of the security of the whole centre. Obviously we would just replaced the wall with the triple, quadruple fencing barriers and alarm systems that we would be putting in elsewhere. However, it does impact on discrete security within One Division of being able to divide One Division off from the rest of the centre. In terms of overall Townsville Correctional Centre perimeter security, there is no difference.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: So how big a change would it be, or what problems would there be if the wall came down—if that physical brick/concrete/rubble structure was demolished.

Mr Millican: To me, as a planner and designer, and to John, who is the architect, none. We would just extend the fence, and change the roadway.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: From an operational viewpoint, does it create difficulties with the operation of prisoner management?

Mr Wright: I do not believe so.

The CHAIRMAN: So you could live without the wall?

Mr Wright: I could.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: If this Committee were to recommend that the wall come down, and we had the funds - the funds might not be there at the moment - we are not going to hear, “You have now destroyed the security of the prison. You have now made it difficult. You have now got a highly insecure prison.”

Mr Millican: I am a director, a paid employee of the commission. I can state that in terms of the types of perimeter barriers that we have - I take my advice from Bernie - we would provide a secure perimeter, a la Sir David Longland. However, the future of the wall is not my decision either to recommend or make a decision on. I have stated my case before the board previously and, as I said before, it has been debated a great deal.

Mr Wright: I am in a similar awkward position. I think the simple answer is that, irrespective of whether there is a wall there or there is not, or whether I get two buildings or 10 buildings, my job is to manage the facility that is built. Based on that knowledge, for me personally, or for me as a manager of the facility, whether the wall is there or not, I will continue to manage it, and that was the context in which I gave those answers.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: Where the sports area and hobbies area is marked, you said that you hoped that some of that red area there would stay grassed so people could feel the grass under their feet, etc., but they are confined physically within that black line which is the wall. If the wall were no longer there, is it then possible to do something at not a huge expense to still physically contain and maintain the security of your high-risk prisoner while still allowing those other things to occur?

Mr Wright: I believe there would need to be a physical barrier.

The CHAIRMAN: Bernie Green would like to come in on this answer.

Mr Green: Just to make the point that, in the board's point of view, it has been discussed but not in any great depth. I do not think the board would oppose the wall coming down. It probably involves more of a cost factor and what that does to our \$9m. It is not cheap. I am quite sure that the board would not —

Mr Millican: There is a financial penalty connected with the wall. I know that may well be picked up elsewhere because of cutting down the amount of taut wire and then we would have to argue physical barriers versus walls and that sort of thing. It would certainly make it simpler if there was not a wall there.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: Sure. As I understand, there is a financial implication. That is something we would have to fight for, I guess, on your behalf. But what I was looking at was whether there would be a security problem, and I think that has been answered by Gavin and yourself.

Mr Millican: Harold Gregg is self-contained security-wise, and so would that special purpose unit.

The CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, we are just about to finish, so if there is anything you would like to say finally, Gavin or Ross, as a response to anything that has been said this afternoon, now is the time.

Mr Wright: Just in relation to the last few minutes' discussion about the wall, the question was raised would there be anybody who would jump and down and say it is a security issue. I think the possible industrial impact that such a drastic action would possibly have on the staff should not be underestimated, and I believe there would be some very strong opinions amongst the staff about the maintenance of the wall.

The Committee discussed the implications of retaining the One Division wall and the problems of removing it and resolved that the difficulties of managing without the wall could be overcome by the Centre's staff. On the other hand, the trauma and misery inflicted on the prisoners deprived of a view beyond that wall to the world where they are meant to aspire to be, but can no longer see, could not be easily overcome. With this belief in mind the Committee makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION THREE

that the brick and cement wall surrounding One Division be removed.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

that the new style of security fence proposed to be built around the perimeter of the jail be extended to include a fence around One Division and that this project proceed at the earliest possible date.

As indicated above, the unpleasant imposing late Victorian era design of the front wall and entrance to the Centre says much about the institution behind it. The Committee believes that if the Townsville Correctional Centre is intent on bringing its facilities, management and work practices up to the standards required by United Nations charter and by the Queensland Corrective Services Commission it will not be helped by this imposing and unattractive wall providing a conspicuous reminder of "the bad old days". In support of this belief the Committee makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

that the Queensland Corrective Services Commission pursue the demolition of the visually unappealing and imposing front wall of the jail. This project should proceed in accordance with the Commission's budgetary capabilities and programmed renewal of the perimeter fence.

The Committee is aware of the additional cost to achieve this project however it wishes to make the point that the whilst such an edifice remains many ideas and attitudes which the Centre is determined to overcome will remain with it. The return on investment of funds expended on training and changing work practices will not be bolstered by the retention of such an imposing and ugly link with the past.

4. PRISONER'S FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The Committee's questioning concerning the necessity and advisability of carrying out this redevelopment addressed not only the strategic importance of providing improved services but the capacity of the Townsville Correctional Centre's management to meet community expectations and the needs of prisoners.

4.1 CONSULTATION PROCESSES

Committee members firmly believe that the design of a complex such as the Townsville Correctional Centre cannot be successfully achieved without community consultation. The following questioning concerning the consultation process indicates that the Queensland Corrective Services Commission is committed to the consultation process.

Mrs WOODGATE: So you have had consultation with local groups here?

Mr Forster: We did that some years ago. As we develop this model, we will be consulting again to find out if there has been a change.

Mrs WOODGATE: You do intend to have more consultation with local communities on the design before the project proceeds; is that correct?

Mr Millican: I can list some of the major bodies which we propose to have detailed consultations with, particularly over the January/February/March period. Moving the industry block and improving the security is clearly a commission-driven approach. But, in terms of the accommodation upgrades, we will certainly consult with our own board, which is a community based board. We will consult also with politicians at the Federal, State and local level, the local councils, prisoner legal services, Aboriginal and Islander legal services, community groups, the Women's Policy Unit in the Premier's Department and, indeed, our own staff and inmates.

Mrs WOODGATE: What about consultation with the Health Department about the surgery? Does it have input, too?

Mr Millican: We have our own director of health and medical services and senior nursing adviser, who liaise with the Health Department and other health delivery agencies on standards and requirements.

The Committee commends the Commission on its consultation programme and makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION SIX

that maximum consultation processes involving major agencies, including Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders organisations, continue to be conducted as the redevelopment plans proceed.

4.2 PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR EXTERNAL AGENCIES

The high proportion of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Centre led the Committee to question the Commission staff and the community representatives at length concerning the development of services and programmes which were able to specifically address prisoner needs. The adequacy of the facilities designed to provide services such as education, craft, health and community activities came under scrutiny.

Mr Gibney, representing Townsville Community Legal Service, in his opening remarks to the Committee made the following point

Mr Gibney: At the very core of corrections is this need to have effective programs. There is no use whatsoever in having programs or program areas within a new prison such as this if the access is restricted.

The Committee supports this belief and is confident that by creating fewer barriers in the complex, more inmates will have access to the proposed new programmes block. It believes that recommendations two and three will help to facilitate this belief.

The need to provide a variety of programmes was stressed by both Mr Eric Kyle of Murri Action and Ms Narelle Sutherland of North Queensland Prisoners Aid Society. The most vexing issue concerning provision of a programmes facility is not the actual infrastructure; it is the labour intensive nature of providing prisoner access to the area. Double escorts are required to bring prisoners to meetings and other group activities.

The Committee questioned the Queensland Corrective Services Commission concerning the lack of a chapel in the proposed redevelopment. The Committee believes that a quiet, private room suitable for meditation and celebration of religious events should be provided. Ms Sutherland detailed a number of difficulties which she experienced in the course of her duties. It was clear to the Committee that the problems that she experienced were common to the visiting population, whether they be from welfare, religious or community groups, educationalists or prisoners' visitors.

Ms Sutherland: We would argue for some space to be allocated for the use of community groups. At present, when staff members from our organisation interview inmates, they use a very small, dark, airless room at the back of the seniors' office. We would appreciate a new facility.

The Committee supports Ms Sutherland's request for a new facilities and is firmly of the opinion that the work done by the Prisoner's Aid Society and other community, religious and welfare groups is a vital service to the prison community.

In support of this request the Committee makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

that the design of the programme block in the proposed redevelopment include a meeting place where groups of inmates can interact with religious and community groups.

4.3 MEETING ABORIGINES AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS SOCIAL NEEDS

Mr Kyle spoke of significant day to day demands for provision of communal facilities particularly amongst the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander inmates. That group currently comprise 47% of the jail population. The Committee realises that the Queensland Corrective Services Commission has many programmes which address the specific needs of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders which are beyond the scope of this report and that it cannot address the great social problem associated with imprisonment of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. The Committee can however give some recognition to the special needs of this group whilst within the prison environment.

The desire to nurture community spirit and address the special needs of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, which the Queensland Corrective Services Commission has publicly expressed, can in some way be fulfilled by the provision of a designated place where Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander community issues can be discussed.

The CHAIRMAN: Does anyone have a problem with providing an outside communal area for the Aboriginal people, Islander people or the Murri people, to congregate?

Mr Millican: I will ask Mr Wright to comment specifically on what happens here in Townsville at the moment. It was probably an omission of mine this morning that we were discussing that very issue about this time yesterday afternoon here in this very room. Certainly, our approach with that new programs area is to provide some discrete facilities. The board has agreed to provide a number of areas where there are high proportions of Aboriginal prisoners to allow that meeting place to occur. In fact, we were also talking seriously about something in vicinity of the new oval, where there is actually some outdoor area. Certainly, at the moment at Lotus Glen, that outdoor dance ring has been put up. It has been very successful in assisting in the management of the Aboriginal inmates from the cape who are up there. We would certainly be looking at that and talking to the community groups about the details of that.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Wright, do you have any such problems as manager?

Mr Wright: Absolutely not. I do not have a problem with it at all. Mr Kyle mentioned in his statement to the panel that we had a meeting just recently at which we went through, with representatives of Murri Action and a representative body of prisoners, each of the specific recommendations. The outcome of that meeting was that I agreed to establish a communal meeting place. I am waiting on their nomination of points that they believe would be suitable. In terms of the future development—and Mr Kyle may wish to clarify this at some later stage—I am not even sure whether they require a building. It may be as simple as nominating a place where there are some trees and specifying that that is the meeting place. That decision stands for clarification. I certainly do not have a problem with it.

Mr Kyle of Murri Action made a most eloquent plea to the Committee to understand the needs of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, particularly young men, separated from their community, without direction from their own cultural leaders and elders.

Mr Kyle: All of our people who go through this system are dealing with a foreign system. They are dealing with the conflict between white culture and black culture. Because of previous Queensland Government actions, we were dispersed away from our elders and the problem is getting us back together. The closest that we can get is our elders in our community coming

back and talking to younger people about culturally appropriate things. As I said, that is how I speak. I have no expertise in counselling, but when the Government invited me out to talk to a young bloke who was at risk, I just sat down as an Aboriginal person and talked about the strength of Aboriginal culture. I said, "Take it with you. Those voices that you hear are not Aboriginal voices. You use the strength within you to fight your depression." To my knowledge, he has settled down, but this might affect him more and we have to go back now and renew that thinking within him to get him through the night. As we always said, it is at night when things happen. When you are alone and the door locks, you start thinking. That is when you decide whether you want to live or whether you want to die. If they have got it in their minds to think, "I am a worthy person. My culture existed for 40 thousand years. I hold all of these good things. Why should I die?" I say, "What do you want to die for? We are here. We exist, and good things are going to happen to us from now on." The young fellows take that with them to bed.

Although this reference is particularly directed to the very real problem of suicide by prison inmates, it also clearly states the value of cultural and community support for young Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander prisoners.

Further discussions with the Queensland Corrective Services Commission staff indicated that support had been gained for negotiations to occur between the Aborigine and Torres Strait Islanders and the Townsville Correctional Centre manager to establish a community meeting place.

The Committee takes this opportunity to put its weight behind the concept of establishing an area where Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander inmates can meet and recommends:

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

that the plans for redevelopment of the Correctional Centre include a meeting area for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. This area should be identified in consultation with Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander inmates and with the Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander community in general.

4.4 PROVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

The hearing process highlighted problems with staffing and productivity levels. The complexity of services provided by Townsville Correctional Centre require a high level of staff to cover services seven days a week - 24 hours a day in maximum and medium security, remand and all womens corrective services.

Members discussed the Townsville Correctional Centre rehabilitation programmes to ensure that prisoners are well placed to return to a productive life in the community and not to come back to the Correctional Centre. The Committee was clearly reminded of the high cost of caring for prisoners and discussed how vitally important it is that the corrective process be successful so that taxpayers do not have to fund care and services to large numbers of re-offenders. It is undeniable that rehabilitation is inextricably linked to education and work skills.

The following evidence from Mr Ross Millican of Queensland Corrective Services Commission clearly indicates why educational, recreational and cultural programme facilities are necessary for this redevelopment plan to be of benefit.

Mr Millican: Overall, the prisoner today is better educated than he perhaps was 10 years ago. There are more drug-related offences appearing before us in terms of either getting money to buy drugs, or related to drugs, which requires different treatment models. The numbers of offenders under the age of 21 is increasing substantially. In many cases, they are not in for their first offence; they have been before the magistrates on previous occasions, and they have reached the stage at which the magistrate has run out of options. He has tried community service, he has tried probation, and they end up in gaol. They are the ones that we really have to target. They are bright young men and, to a lesser extent, women. The percentage of women prisoners is much lower than the percentage of males. They are in for things such as break, enter and steal, and unlawful use of motor vehicles on numerous occasions. It is not unusual to find multiple offences of the same type coming in. Another issue is the very disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Islanders in our correctional environment. Both groups, that is, the young and the Aboriginals, require a different way of handling it, rather than the straight and old-fashioned secure incarceration. There must be more emphasis on programs, and more emphasis on teaching life skills and work skills. In some cases, we need to teach a lot of them just how to cope with life. To me, anyway, as a personal observation, the idea of the hardened criminal that we hear about is perhaps not quite true any more. A lot of them are targets of opportunity, or they are brought about by frustration. We have to learn to deal with them, and deal with them in a productive way that puts them back into society as contributing members of that society.

There are many administrative problems with development of prisoner work skills and rehabilitation to the community. As Mr Millican points out it is highly labour intensive work escorting prisoners from place to place and providing custodial services in workshops and other places.

Mr Millican: Given that we were faced with the constraint of retaining the wall, we had to look at providing a balance of activities, programs and industry areas for everybody. The proposed design calls for access to all parts of the centre as needed by prisoners. The industry area has been set up specifically as a “clean zone”. Anyone who goes in there and comes out of the area is cleaned prior to going back to his or her living quarters, whether that is outside the wall, the women’s area, the farm, One Division or Two Division. They would be screened and cleaned, in other words searched, prior to going there, so that no contraband comes out of there. So therefore, it was certainly proposed that all inmates could work in that industries area once the final stages have been developed.

There is probably a little bit of danger in taking the actual titles on that plan as being sacrosanct and saying, “This is just a hobby shop”, because we were trying to differentiate to some extent what we were talking about. In Two Division, we are talking about a major programs complex in terms of computer facilities, classrooms, syndicate rooms, certainly community meeting rooms, a case management area for counselling sessions, legal visits areas and things like that. The hobbies area, as it is portrayed on there, was primarily to support the special handling unit that would be available for access, so it really is an added low-key industrial area, hobbies area, artefact area and programs area rolled into one to support what is — regardless of whether the wall exists or not — largely a self-contained, special-purpose area.

We also looked at what was already in there. The Harold Gregg unit has existing program facilities. It has dividable lecture rooms and classrooms there right now that are available for use by inmates. It has quiet rooms, reading rooms, counselling rooms there right now both in the units—and you saw that, the quiet room off the main living area—dining area, plus other rooms along the other side of the spine where the reception area is. It had a range of physical facilities already available. The facilities available elsewhere in the correctional centre, particularly outside, are meagre compared with what already exists inside the Harold Gregg unit. We are providing a balance so that, yes, people can move between the various parts of the centre and, yes, they can all go to industries if they are suitable to work there and, at the same time, there are some discrete program areas, activity areas and hobby work areas that are accessible within the confines of the various living spaces. We are trying to provide a balance.

The labour intensive nature of corrective services is not discussed in this report, however, the Committee believes that this re-development must facilitate easier prisoner movement without increasing security staff numbers. The Committee recognises that provision of effective programmes using the Harold Gregg unit is made difficult by its high security design. Notwithstanding problems associated with custodial security, there is a great need to improve rehabilitation programmes in the Townsville Correctional Centre. The present industries which the Centre undertakes are not sufficiently diverse to provide a good range of skills which are saleable in the market place. In the case of the commercial laundry - it is the largest commercial laundry in Townsville - however laundry work is not a big employer in the wider Townsville community. The Townsville Correctional Centre, although it does recognise the need to provide prisoners with work skills, must place considerably more emphasis on education and training programmes. At the time of the inquiry, the Committee learnt that the education officer position was not filled. There was also some concern about access to the library and the quality of its collection. As Ms Sutherland points out:

Ms Sutherland: The North Queensland Prisoners Aid Society does not have the resources to do the kind of research that I think is necessary to establish what training needs and labour force requirements there are at the moment. My point was that to address the training needs of prisoners and the sorts of things that might gain them employment on the outside, you are going to have to have a fairly dynamic approach to industries. I was just suggesting that there could be some workshop space that was readily adaptable for different purposes. I know that they have got mechanical and carpentry workshops that prisoners are involved in. Certainly, there has been a lot of interest in this correctional centre amongst the Aboriginal prisoners in the production of painting and handicrafts. We have some very talented people. You need a minimal amount of facilities to do that - lathes, implements or whatever. I do not purport to have all the answers, but I am just raising some issues.

The Committee believes that the redevelopment must improve physical mobility of prisoners within the complex so that security staff expenditure can be reduced and the funds used to provide better rehabilitation programmes. In support of this belief the Committee makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION NINE

that the programme block proposed for the redevelopment be designed to maximise accessibility, to facilitate provision of literacy and numeracy training, lifeskills training and other programmes to enhance inmates' future opportunities.

4.5 ABORIGINE AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER TRAINING AND CULTURAL SKILLING

The case for provision of training of Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander prisoners in gainful and uplifting work, craftsmanship and artistry is clearly presented in the following excerpt from the transcript.

Mr STEPHAN: It is important that there are special Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander training, particularly in relation to painting. If there is not a workshop for carpentry, that is another opening that is a possibility to give them an interest.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there anything going on inside now in the craft or painting line?

Mr Kyle: Not now. They are doing their own thing in their cells. As Ms Sutherland said, there is some beautiful Aboriginal art. It is very beautiful.

The CHAIRMAN: But there is no actual place over there, is there, to teach?

Mr Kyle: If we are talking about employment instead of industries—there could be a place in this new structure where the Murris can go to do their art in a better setting than sitting in a cell, where they can make the artefacts, where they could be sold as an income, where they can get some income back, and also get their work outside. They have been given money, but they cannot spend it to do these things—to buy tools that they need to make artefacts of Aboriginal art. But along with that, they also need somewhere where their cultural education could take place. The culture is not just language, it is a whole thing about the art and the dancing and singing. It is done in a very limited way here, but we need to expand that if it is going to be a social place and a better place for the Murris to exist in during their sentences.

The Committee supports the belief and makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION TEN

that the Commission pursue policies and provide facilities which encourage development of Aboriginal art and craft and other industries which are beneficial and of interest to the Aboriginal community within the centre.

5. SPECIAL NEEDS - ABORIGINES AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS AND WOMEN

Throughout the hearing process, references constantly arose to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The wide ranging, highly publicised nature of that inquiry and the 339 recommendations made ensured that both State and Federal Governments would not ignore its findings. The Queensland Government has established a unit in the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs and an implementation task force in the Attorney-General's Department. The Committee received an extensive amount of material which detailed the Commission's response to many of the recommendations. On this occasion, the Committee will address only two issues.

5.1 SHARED ACCOMMODATION

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody made a number of recommendations concerning design of prison accommodation and this proposal to redevelop Townsville Correctional Centre proposes construction of a number of share accommodation blocks. The following extract from the transcript of the hearing gives specific details of the design of such accommodation.

Mr STEPHAN: Would the residential type of environment in the prison help the Aborigines when they are in custody?

Mr Millican: We believe so. Although I have not personally had discussions with the local community up here about residential accommodation, discussions with our Aboriginal liaison staff and Islander liaison staff - I was talking to some of them here yesterday - reveal that they believe that that would provide a much better environment for Aboriginal prisoners serving a term of incarceration. It provides greater flexibility and allows Aboriginal inmates to keep the kinship going, to have visits from the elders, and to have greater freedom of movement within the confines of a secure perimeter. We have found even among the white inmates that, where the deprivation of liberty is provided by the perimeter rather than provided inside the correctional centre, there has been a lowering of tension, a lowering of assaults against officers and a lowering of assaults on inmates by inmates. More detailed discussions with community groups and our own Aboriginal staff should take place as to the design of those residential units. At present, we are considering whether they should house from three to six inmates.

The CHAIRMAN: Although they are called residential, they are still medium security, are they not? You still envisage a cell that will be locked at night?

Mr Millican: No. We are looking at something that is very similar to a three to five bedroom bungalow style house that just happens to exist in the confines of a multi-layered secure perimeter. If the inmates so choose, they will have the capacity to lock the doors at night.

Mr T. B. SULLIVAN: Would they lock their own rooms?

Mr Millican: They could lock their own rooms. There would be a capacity - with the range of accommodation which would be available in Townsville with that design - for a very secure single cell detention unit inside the wall, as you saw with the Harold Gregg medium security

unit, where inmates are locked in cells at night -

Ms Sutherland supported this design idea and made the following statement.

Ms Sutherland: We also support the replacement of Blocks 1 to 4 in Two Division with residential-type accommodation spaces. Prisoners Aid supports any move towards accommodation arrangements which encourage the development of independent living skills. Many prisoners spend a long time in prison. If they are housed in high security areas, they often lose their living skills. We very strongly support the construction of any type of accommodation arrangement that mirrors as closely as possible normal household arrangements.

In accordance with the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommendations and the evidence provided to it, the Committee makes the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION ELEVEN

that the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Recommendation Number 173 be implemented.

"that initiatives directed to providing a more humane environment through introducing shared accommodation facilities for community living and other means, should be supported and pursued in accordance with experience and subject to security requirements."

The design of this style of accommodation unit should be done in consultation with the Aboriginal community.

5.2 APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION FOR SUICIDAL PRISONERS

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommendations were made primarily to prevent suicides in prisons. Only one week before this Committee's inquiry began, a young Aborigine took his life in the Townsville Correctional Centre.

Mr Eric Kyle spoke of the trauma which that event had inflicted on the boy's family, on the Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander community in general, on him in particular and on the attitude of the Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander prisoners in the Townsville Correctional Centre.

Mr Kyle: As I said, we are looking at this whole list of things from the Murri perspective. We have so many of our people imprisoned out here, and still our people are dying in custody. We have to do something. I am just at a loss now, because I carry a lot of guilt about what happened last Friday, and I should not. The minimum observation cell - I have just taken a few things down here - the boy who died here the other day was in an observation cell. The observation cell is where they put people at risk. It must be manned as a standard. It is no good having a cell unless what the recommendations say are acted out, and someone is there to prevent a person, who is thinking about doing something, from doing it. It happened, and somebody still dies. Observation cells are of no use unless there is proper observation or the ability to observe those people who are at risk and who go into these places.

In support of Mr Kyle's statements, Ms Sutherland gave the following evidence.

Ms Sutherland: Since I have been working for Prisoners Aid, and that has been for nearly 10 months, there have been three suicides in this correctional centre. Two of those have been in C Wing. I think the establishment of the main observation cells is a big start, where people do not have the physical infrastructure to hang themselves. We do not have the old sections in C Wing. If you were depressed and you got put in C Wing where there was no running water, no toilet, and bars where you could very easily tie a knot—I mean that sounds awful, but it is a very fundamental thing that we have a kind of physical construction that makes killing yourself quite difficult. But that is when people have got to the stage that it is getting imminent that they will try to do something to themselves. Another point in that regard is that I think officers need to be able to constantly view somebody. I think that if people have got to walk from an office in the middle of that circle into C Wing and then back out again, people should be placed somewhere where they could be viewed. That is the physical infrastructure. Obviously, improvements could be made there. But then you have got to look at the context as an interactive thing and the provision of programs. There are a few programs: education, counselling, and so forth, that are going to alleviate some of the pressures of being incarcerated.

The Committee can only agree with these witnesses and make the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION TWELVE

that the Commission, taking into account the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, provide for prisoner observation cells which facilitate constant and ready observation and surveillance of prisoners at risk.

5.3 SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR WOMEN

It is often the case that because of low numbers of women prisoners, the full array of infrastructure and programmes are not available. Consequently, women can experience more rigid custodial treatment than men. This is the case in Townsville. All 18 women prisoners are in maximum security accommodation because there is no other accommodation available. Mr Millican confirmed this matter as follows.

Mr Millican: We are providing better facilities for our women who are currently all housed in high-security facilities and do not have the range of accommodation facilities available to them that their male counterparts have in Townsville, or indeed, that the other females within the correctional environment have in the south-east corner.

The following extract from the transcript gives a full description of the changes planned for provision of corrective services for women in Townsville with the implementation of the redevelopment proposal.

Mr Forster: We will be converting the existing women's facility into a medical area. We will be adding an extension to the women's unit, which will be available for remand women and high-security women. We will be moving the women out of the accommodation that they are in at the moment onto the reserve into residential-type accommodation. We will give them a range of accommodation, both high security and low security.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not understand what is happening in the women's section. I understand that you are changing some of that to the medical part. I can see from your slide that you have a six-cell women's holding area. I am just not sure about where the other 12 women are going to be housed.

Mr Forster: On the reserve, but not within the correctional centre as we are redeveloping it. If you refer to the hand-out and how we are going to do it, you will see that two items occur, which are done as separate exercises that are not tied to the time frame here. One is the annexe, which will be out of Townsville completely, and the other is the establishment of women into a lower security rated area. At this stage, we are looking at using some of the residences that are already available on the reserve and putting them in there. But high security will be within the secure perimeter; lower security will be outside.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the reserve you keep referring to?

Mr Forster: The 100 or a couple of hundred hectares that is the Townsville Correctional Centre.

Mrs WOODGATE: That is those houses we saw on the way in?

Mr Forster: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: So only six women will be inside this perimeter?

Mr Forster: Up to six women. I think that if we put all the high security and all the remand prisoners in there, it would be four. It fluctuates.

The CHAIRMAN: So you have only got four women now out of the 18 who would be high security prisoners? The rest could go into community accommodation.

Mr Millican: On a daily living average, yes. There would be a peak and trough around that, but on a moving average, around about four.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Millican, do you have any plans to buy anything or establish a community corrective services centre for the women in town, as exists in Albion in Brisbane?

Mr Millican: At this stage, we have just negotiated the sale of a property we had in town, called the Avenue, which was originally purchased as a community correctional centre. For a number of reasons, including issues with the council about zoning and all that sort of thing, that did not proceed. We just sold that. At the moment, we are exploring other options to purchase sites within the Townsville community, be they houses, a motel, or something like the guesthouse that the Avenue was, for both male and female prisoners. There is no male or female facility in the community in Townsville. The nearest one is in Cairns, and that has only got six beds in it. So we would be looking at attempting to develop one for both males and females; obviously, not necessarily the same one, but one for each.

The CHAIRMAN: What would be the time frame on doing that?

Mr Millican: It is very hard to pin down, because it is a very delicate consultation process with the council and the local neighbourhoods. Even with being asked to identify potential sites, there is a long consultation process. We would obviously like to do it this financial year. We have the funds available again. We have had some very preliminary discussions primarily at local member level up here to see where we might be able to go and look. Our local manager from community corrections is actively seeking possible sites so that we can start exploring and discussing with the local communities and the local council.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you see it as an urgent priority of the commission to establish that sort of centre up here?

Mr Millican: In keeping with our overall direction to move non-violent offenders out of the correctional system like this, yes. We would like to have continued with the Avenue. We are trying to do something else. At this stage, it remains to be seen exactly what we will do. We have the option on a couple of motels, but they present difficulties in terms of numbers and locations. We are also looking at the options on a couple of houses that might become available in an area where the community might be more accepted. It is still early days. We are hopeful to do something this financial year.

The Committee considered this information and returned later in the inquiry to question Mr Wright - the Manager of the Townsville Correctional Centre on how he would ensure that women, if they were accommodated as proposed, would access the other services and facilities.

Ms Sutherland spoke of her concerns for women prisoners and the narrow range of facilities which were provided for them. She particularly stressed the need for women to access rehabilitation programmes and pointed out some of the difficulties with the re-development proposals.

Ms Sutherland: Many prisoners spend a long time in prison. If they are housed in high security areas, they often lose their living skills. We very strongly support the construction of any type of accommodation arrangement that mirrors as closely as possible normal household arrangements.

I will just conclude with some comments about the plans for the women's division, which include the construction of six high-security remand cells for women and the provision of low and open security accommodation for 10 to 12 women on site-existing residences. Prisoners Aid has some difficulty in knowing how to respond to those plans. We certainly agree that women need a range of accommodation options. At the moment, they stay in the same area throughout the whole of the period of their sentence and have no graduated release program as is provided for male prisoners. However, we are concerned to see that placing women in residential facilities on the prison grounds does not detract from the impetus to establish a half-way house in the Townsville region. We have been very actively involved in lobbying for a half-way house facility here in Townsville. It is an issue of some concern to us that we have 159 bed spaces available in south-east Queensland in community-based accommodation, but we still have none here. I would just not want to see that sort of eighth-way house arrangement take away from the push for a proper integrated move back to the community.

Other problems involve the level of scrutiny to which women might be subjected if they are living in a prison reserve next to houses in which prison officers' families live. I am not quite sure how the neighbourly relations might be managed there. In addition, it needs to be recognised that there is a lack of transport and other facilities for women participating in

outside programs if they live out here on the reserve. My other concern is for those six women who are left over here. They are very isolated. Sometimes, for very long periods, an individual has only five other women with whom she can interact. For instance, women who are doing life might be in high security for any number of years - perhaps five or six years. I am wondering whether they will be left in that small space. At present, even the 18 women are finding that it is a mere viable amount of people to run programs. Unless some efforts are made to integrate the women into the general prison population, I think that they could potentially miss out on a lot of support.

The Committee discussed the implication of the Commission's proposals to deal with women offenders.

The CHAIRMAN: That is a good answer. We will have to read that paper. I thought that Ms Sutherland raised a very valid point when she was talking about the isolation of those six women in that holding cell, as far as their access to programs is concerned. Mr Wright, you are the manager. You would not really consider putting them with the men, I guess, to do programs?

Mr Wright: We do run these programs now.

The CHAIRMAN: So it will realistically happen that the women could go over—it is going to be a long walk—to that program area and share those programs with the men?

Mr Wright: Where that is appropriate. We are certainly exploring that at the moment. We have already run some mixed programs, and we have had some mixed sporting arrangements. It is not beyond the realms of possibility.

The CHAIRMAN: For example, if the Apex group were to come in and teach debating or whatever, do you reckon that the women could join in? Realistically, would someone be available to escort them over to that program area at night-time to do that?

Mr Wright: That is really an operational question that we cannot address until such time as we know the exact design of the facility, what the access availability will be, and what the staffing arrangements are. We need to view this, certainly at this early stage, as a concept rather than as a fixed design. A lot of those issues need to be worked through.

The CHAIRMAN: Does it worry you that you will have only six women there, as far as their socialisation goes?

Mr Wright: That was not my understanding of it. As I said, it is very early stages yet.

Mrs WOODGATE: Rather than saying that you will look at that later on, should you not be looking at that now and making sure that it will be designed so that that can happen?

Mr Wright: Yes. That is the purpose of what we are kicking off now.

Mr Millican: For a start, it is not just six cells. Again, it is a total environment. The hospital complex is not going to be separated from it. There is program space available now and activity space available now, including the unused tennis court area and that whole area. The average stay in remand is about 42 days. I know that about one a year stays in excess of a year, but the average is around about 42 days. Only about 26 or 27 per cent of those actually

go to sentence, and they all end up out on release. We are not looking at holding people there for any great length of time. We do classify remands, so we are only talking about high security. Even remand females who are classified as low risk can go and live outside where they have access to the courts and legal service. I might add that there is one area where we are in serious consultation with our own people and the commission and the Women's Policy Unit and whether that is actually really viable to do it that way or we had better come out with some other solution. It is really not so much the high-security prisoners that concern us; it is the remand prisoners who present a challenge to us because they have to remain here to go to court. There is fairly serious consultation and serious discussion with the Women's Policy Unit and primarily women's lobby groups or interest groups down in Brisbane through the Catholic prison ministry and other organisations about that because it is certainly something that is exercising our minds at the moment to try and make sure that is going to work, or we have got to come up with some other idea.

The CHAIRMAN: They are not just remand women, are they? There are lifers. As Noel was saying, some of them will spend six or seven years there.

Mr Millican: A lifer would spend, on average, only about two and a half years as a high-security prisoner.

The CHAIRMAN: Then they would move across the road into a -

Mr Millican: They would go down to a medium-security prison. Some go even quicker than that. It all depends on the circumstances of the crime—the judge's sentencing remarks are taken into account - and pre-sentence reports by the community corrections people. The time they actually spend on that classification can be shortened quite considerably, particularly when you consider that the vast majority of lifers are one-time violators of the law and will probably never do it again. In terms of institutional management, they really become low risk very quickly, and in most cases are the easiest to manage.

The Committee observed that the Commission staff had not thoroughly worked through the full implications of its plans for women's facilities and services. In summing up its feelings on the matter the Committee makes the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION THIRTEEN

that the provisions for women within the redevelopment plan be reconsidered so that problems that arise because of the multi-functional nature of the design and variety of security levels required for women, can be more adequately addressed. In particular, the Committee is concerned that small, isolated groups of women within the reserve may well be disadvantaged by the present proposals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION ONE

that the Queensland Corrective Services Commission's strategic plan for re-development of the Townsville Correctional Centre proceed. 5

RECOMMENDATION TWO

that the urgent need for this redevelopment be recognised by elimination of any further delays. 8

RECOMMENDATION THREE

that the brick and cement wall surrounding One Division be removed. 14

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

that the new style of security fence proposed to be built around the perimeter of the jail be extended to include a fence around One Division and that this project proceed at the earliest possible date. 14

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

that the Queensland Corrective Services Commission pursue the demolition of the visually unappealing and imposing front wall of the jail. This project should proceed in accordance with the Commission's budgetary capabilities and programmed renewal of the perimeter fence. 14

RECOMMENDATION SIX

that maximum consultation processes involving major agencies, including Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders organisations, continue to be conducted as the redevelopment plans proceed. 15

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

that the design of the programme block in the proposed redevelopment include a meeting place where groups of inmates can interact with religious and community groups. 16

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

that the plans for redevelopment of the Correctional Centre include a meeting area for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. This area should be identified in consultation with Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander inmates and with the Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander community in general. 18

RECOMMENDATION NINE

that the programme block proposed for the redevelopment be designed to maximise accessibility, to facilitate provision of literacy and numeracy training, lifeskills training and other programmes to enhance inmates' future opportunities. 20

RECOMMENDATION TEN

that the Commission pursue policies and provide facilities which encourage development of Aboriginal art and craft and other industries which are beneficial and of interest to the Aboriginal community within the centre. 21

RECOMMENDATION ELEVEN

that the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Recommendation Number 173 be implemented.

"that initiatives directed to providing a more humane environment through introducing shared accommodation facilities for community living and other means, should be supported and pursued in accordance with experience and subject to security requirements."

The design of this style of accommodation unit should be done in consultation with the Aboriginal community. 23

RECOMMENDATION TWELVE

that the Commission, taking into account the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, provide for prisoner observation cells which facilitate constant and ready observation and surveillance of prisoners at risk. 24

RECOMMENDATION THIRTEEN

that the provisions for women within the redevelopment plan be reconsidered so that problems that arise because of the multi-functional nature of the design and variety of security levels required for women, can be more adequately addressed. In particular, the Committee is concerned that small, isolated groups of women within the reserve may well be disadvantaged by the present proposals. 28

APPENDIX ONE

List of Witnesses

Mr Ross Millican
Director
Operation Planning and Co-ordination
Queensland Corrective Services Commission

Mr John Forster
Consulting Architect
Operational Planning and Co-ordination
Queensland Corrective Services Commission

Mr Gavin Wright
General Manager
Townsville Correctional Centre

Mr Bernie Green
Queensland Corrective Services Commission Board

Mr Jim Gibney
Townsville Community Legal Service

Ms Narelle Sutherland
North Queensland Prisoner's Aid Society

Mr Eric Kyle
Murri Action

APPENDIX TWO

Public Works Committee Act 1989

S. 46 Where Minister to report. Where a report of the Committee recommends that a particular action be taken by the Government with respect to a matter, the appropriate responsible Minister of the Crown shall within the period of not more than three months after the report has been tabled or is deemed to have been tabled in the Legislative Assembly, or if at the expiration of that period the Legislative Assembly is not sitting, at the earliest opportunity after that period table a report in writing in the Legislative Assembly as to the action (if any) taken or proposed to be taken by the Government with respect to the recommendation of the Committee.